

A Guide to

GRAND CANYON VILLAGE

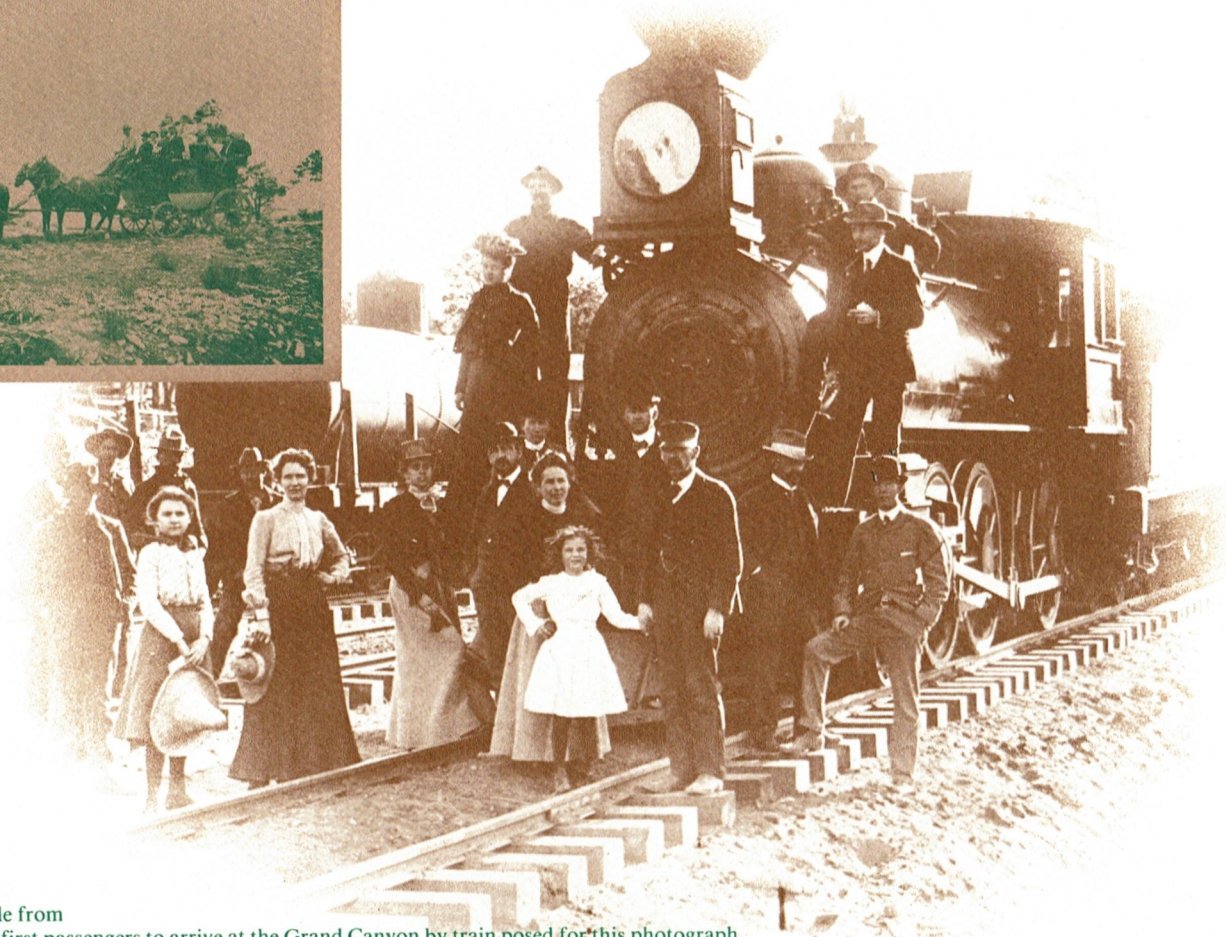
HISTORIC DISTRICT



by Timothy Manns with illustrations by Elizabeth Dillon Smith



J. Wilbur Thurber operated the first stage from Flagstaff to the rim of the Grand Canyon.



After the three-hour ride from Williams, Arizona, the first passengers to arrive at the Grand Canyon by train posed for this photograph.

INTRODUCTION

September 18, 1901.

Santa Fe engineer Harry Schlee eases locomotive 282 along the last mile of track. Though his passengers are anxious to arrive, he pulls the heavy load of tank cars cautiously over the new rails. The few passengers talk excitedly about the event soon to occur. In minutes, they will be the first visitors to reach the Grand Canyon by train.

Most of them have been here before, taking the expensive, 11-hour stage trip from Flagstaff. At \$3.95 the 3-hour trip from Williams is a bargain. Its speed and low price will probably bring visitors by the horde, but they are the first. The train will solve another problem too, bringing tank cars of water to the dry South Rim. Harry Schlee sounds the whistle as 282 pulls up to the station — the end of the line and beginning of an era.

A new period in the history of the Grand Canyon began on that day in 1901, but this unique landscape had already been

attracting people for many years. They gathered wild plant foods and hunted here almost 4,000 years before the train arrived. Eight centuries ago, people lived and farmed both in the canyon and on its rims. In 1540, Spaniards from Coronado's expedition were the first Europeans to view the Grand Canyon. Modern settlement, however, did not begin until 1883 when John Hance built a cabin 12 miles (19.2 km) east of the present Grand Canyon Village. It was prospecting that first drew Hance and other pioneers, but they soon realized that tourism was a more lucrative business than mining.

When the train came, most people viewed the Grand Canyon from around the head of the Bright Angel Trail. With time, the Village grew and changed as the canyon itself does. To remind us of man's history here, the National Park Service has set aside a selection of older buildings as a historic district. As change continues, these buildings will remain as unchanged as possible, recalling earlier times. The buildings are biographical. They tell how people lived while attempting to understand the Grand Canyon, to feel comfortable with it, and even at times to exploit it.



Red Horse Station, or the Cameron Hotel, as it looked before the second story was removed and it became part of the Bright Angel Lodge. The tent in the foreground is the original Kolb Studio.



Red Horse Station

Before 1901, visitors to the Grand Canyon came by stage. The first regular run was from Flagstaff to John Hance's ranch near Grandview Point. In 1896, J. Wilbur Thurber, the stage operator, started the Bright Angel Hotel with a

cabin and tents on the present site of the Bright Angel Lodge. The stage trip was expensive, and although it could be pleasant in good weather, it was more often long and torturous. The three stops for changing horses were always welcome. One of the stops may have been at a place called "Red Horse." According to early Village residents, the westernmost of the present Bright Angel Lodge cabins once stood at Red Horse. A building of rough-hewn, squared logs, the cabin now stands 91 yards (100 meters) east of the mule corral which is at the head of the Bright Angel Trail. Ralph Cameron moved it here in about 1902, adding a porch and second story to make the Cameron Hotel. From 1910 to 1935, the building housed the U.S. Post Office and, after restoration, it became part of the present lodge.

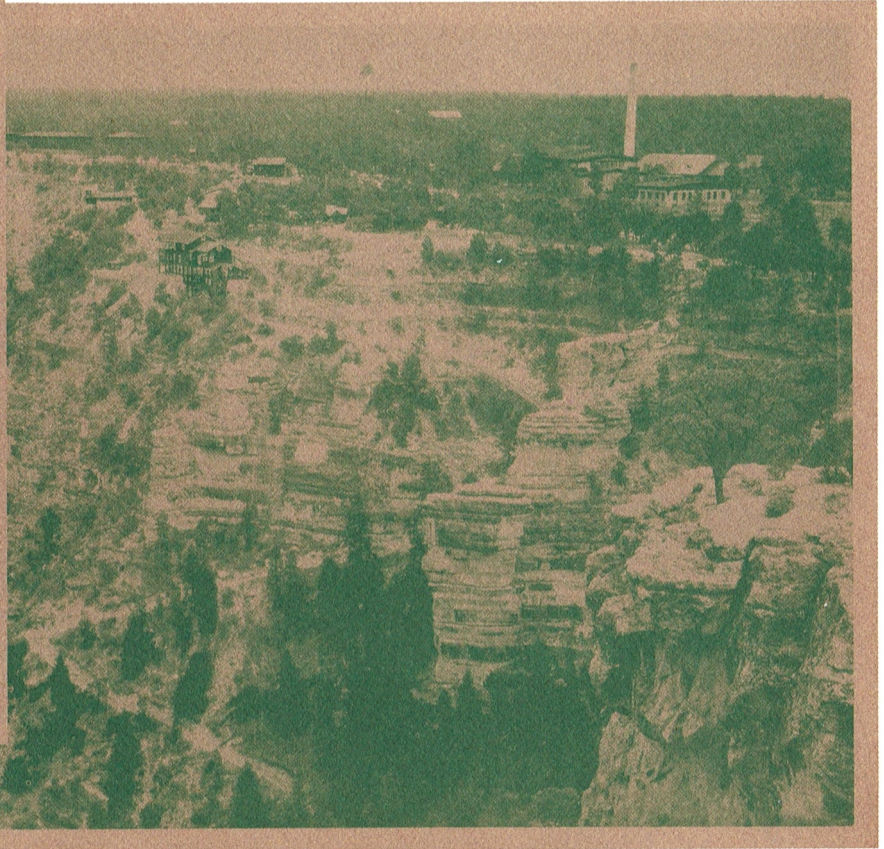
Ralph Cameron loomed large in early Arizona politics. The story of the man who "owned" the Grand Canyon is inseparable from the story of the trail he operated.



Operated as a toll road by Ralph Cameron, the Bright Angel Trail was a center of controversy for years.



Grand Canyon Village
around 1930.



Bright Angel Trail

Phoenix, May 24, 1912. Ralph Cameron, last territorial delegate from Arizona, announced to reporters in the Adams Hotel that he was selling some of his Grand Canyon mining claims.

"I have always said that I would make more money out of the Grand Canyon than any other man. The Bright Angel Trail has been only a side issue with me."

Some have always looked upon the Grand Canyon as a source of gain. This was especially true in the case of Ralph and Niles Cameron, brothers from Maine. By staking claims along the rim of the canyon they gained control over the best sites for hotels. They also claimed land along the old trail and by the springs at Indian Gardens. In a typical show of modesty after improving the trail, they named it Cameron's Trail (today's Bright Angel). Every horse and mule rider that descended the Cameron's private route into the canyon paid the brothers a toll of \$1.

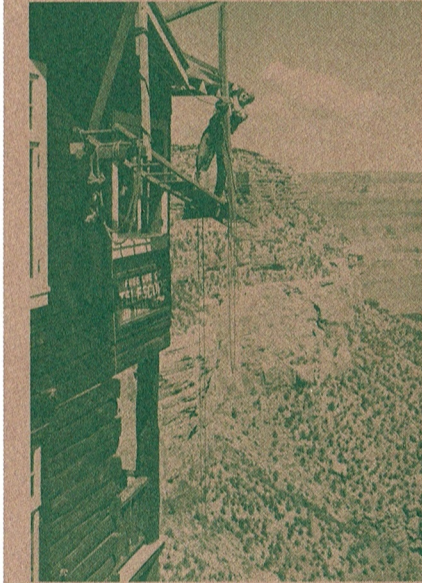
For three decades, Ralph Cameron's use of mining laws to tie up public lands and his power in the territory's Republican party, blocked others who were interested in opening the

Grand Canyon to visitors. The Santa Fe Railway Company and its affiliate, the Fred Harvey Company, disputed Cameron's mining claims 19 times in the Arizona Supreme Court. The steep toll and Cameron's control over Indian Gardens finally forced the railway to build an alternate trail for mule riders which begins at the end of West Rim Drive and descends to Hermit Creek.

The U.S. Forest Service, which managed the rim until 1919, also tried to invalidate Cameron's mining claims. Despite a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, Cameron's election to the U.S. House of Representatives and later the Senate forestalled his removal from the claims until 1928. The year before, the National Park Service had completed the toll-free Kaibab Trail, which threatened to undercut Cameron's business. In 1906, Coconino County had taken over the Bright Angel Trail, but Cameron had continued to operate it for the county, retaining most of the profits for himself. The federal government finally obtained the trail from the county and Cameron was out of business.

In the history of Grand Canyon Village, the attempt by government to control development along the rim has been a major theme. Ralph Cameron was the first and mightiest opponent.

Perched on the rim of the Grand Canyon, Kolb Studio was begun in 1904.



Emery Kolb painting the studio on scaffolding of his own design.



Kolb Studio

This building also recalls an earlier era and the controversy of development along the rim. When Ellsworth and Emery Kolb began their photographic studio, Grand Canyon Village was a very different place. Even in the Village, visitors wandering the rim were startled to find half-wild horses and cattle wandering with them. Along the railroad tracks, heaps of trash and dilapidated huts contrasted with the awesome scene a few hundred yards away. Between the canyon and the huts, the Kolb Brothers constructed a small building in 1904. The studio reached its present size in 1926.

To solve some of the problems in the Village and to promote orderly growth, the U.S. Forest Service prepared the first master plan for the Grand Canyon's rim in 1910. In 1917, Aldo Leopold (later to become famous for his work in conservation and as the author of *A Sand County Almanac*) wrote a more elaborate proposal. He outlined a system of zones similar to that in Grand Canyon National Park's current master plan. In this proposal, the rim was to be reserved for walking and enjoying views of the canyon. All facilities would be built far enough from the rim to at least permit paths for

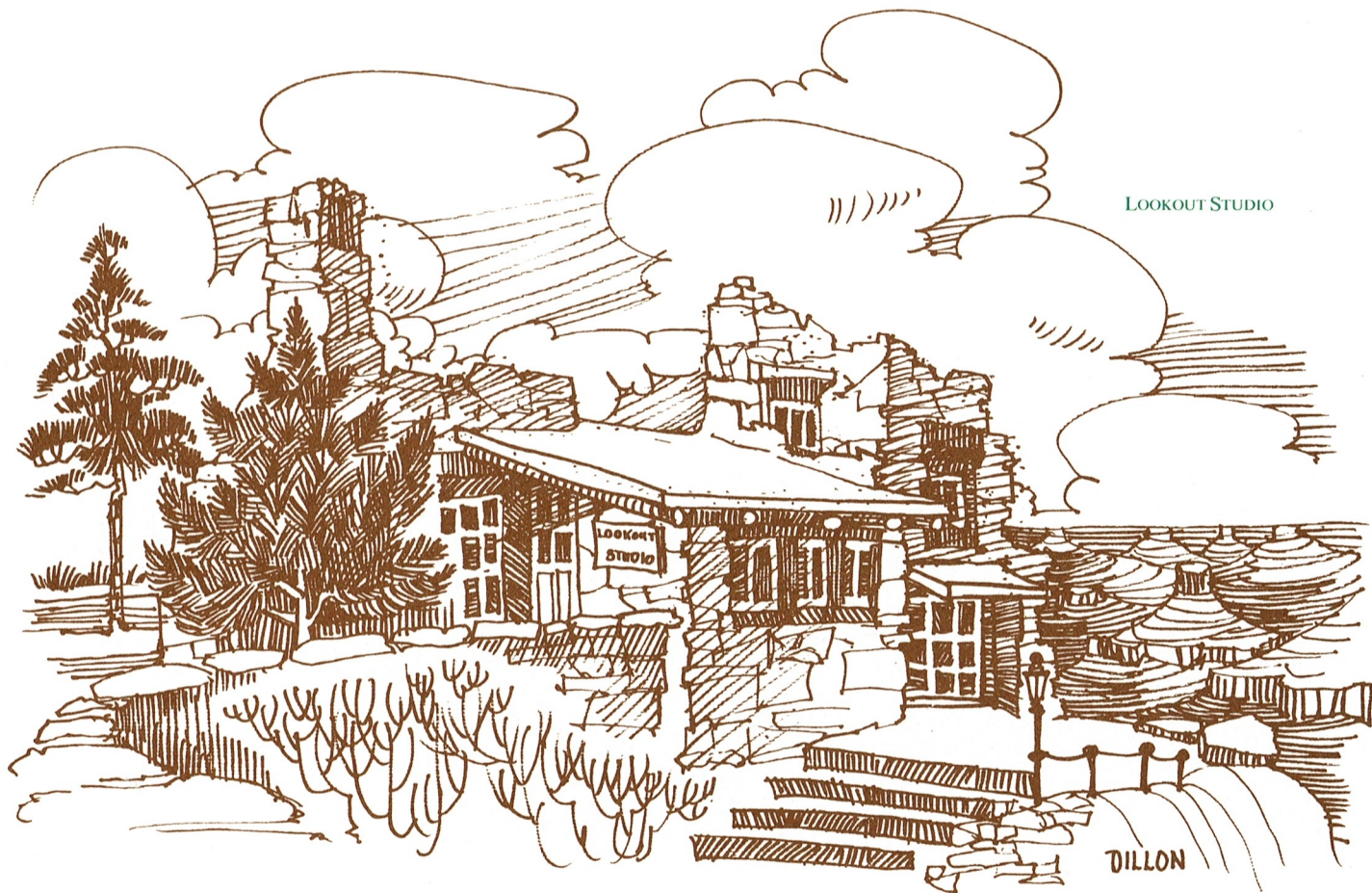
walking along the canyon's edge. "*The Kolb building is unfortunate,*" wrote Leopold, "*both as to design and location. It does not belong on the rim.*"

As Leopold was writing his plan, the Kolbs were holding daily showings of the film they had made during their daring 1911 river trip down the Colorado River and occasionally preaching to their audiences against the Forest Service and the Santa Fe Railway.

Leopold also questioned whether Kolb's Wednesday night dances, Saturday night Hollywood movies, soda fountain, and planned pool hall were appropriate at the very edge of the Grand Canyon and at the head of its most important trail.

But the efforts of the government and the railway to move Kolb from the rim could not prevail against Emery's popularity and powerful friends, including Gifford Pinchot, "father" of the U.S. Forest Service, and Gilbert Grosvenor, editor of *National Geographic*.

Emery Kolb showed his film, photographed mule riders descending the Bright Angel Trail, and sold curios until his death in 1976. Today, the National Park Service owns the building and will probably adapt it for use as an interpretive center. Its addition to the National Register of Historic Places has precluded following Leopold's advice.



LOOKOUT STUDIO

DILLON

Lookout Studio

Unable to oust Kolb, the Fred Harvey Company decided to compete with him. They built their own shop on the rim in 1914 after a design by company architect Mary E. Jane Colter. The shop sold photographic prints and books about the canyon.

Lookout Studio is an example of the careful thought Colter gave to answering a difficult question. What kind of building is fitting in this unique setting? Colter found an answer by combining the character of the site with her knowledge of architecture and ethnology.

Built low and of rough-cut limestone, the studio blends with its setting and is

hardly visible from the Bright Angel Trail which winds below. Its construction suggests the building practices of the Hopi Indians and their ancestors who lived at the Grand Canyon. The building's original roofline, more uneven than the present one, imitated the form and color of the canyon's cliffs. With some justice, the Kolbs might have argued that their building, clinging to the cliff face and growing gradually through the years, was more "natural" than its carefully designed competitor.

Colter's concern for the setting in which her buildings would be constructed was to have a great effect on Grand Canyon and other national parks. In designing a relatively unobtrusive building, she was in accord with the ideas of Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park and a man prominent in the national park movement. Olmsted said that any structure in a park that drew attention away from the works of nature and to the works of man was inappropriate.

What is appropriate, however, can change with fashion. Designs we think fitting today may not seem so in the future, while some remain pleasing for decades.



Bright Angel Camp, 1898. Buckey O'Neill Cabin is attached at right.



Buckey O'Neill Cabin

In contrast to Lookout Studio, this cabin was probably designed by the same person that cut its logs and fit them in place. It is the oldest surviving structure on the rim and possibly the first built here. In the 1890s, when Buckey O'Neill arrived, a forest of Utah juniper and pinyon pine reached to the rim, and this lonely and remote place was visited chiefly by Havasupai Indians, prospectors, and a small number of adventurous tourists. Buckey seems to have built here because he loved the canyon and was also interested in the area's economic potential, attitudes not considered contradictory in O'Neill's day.

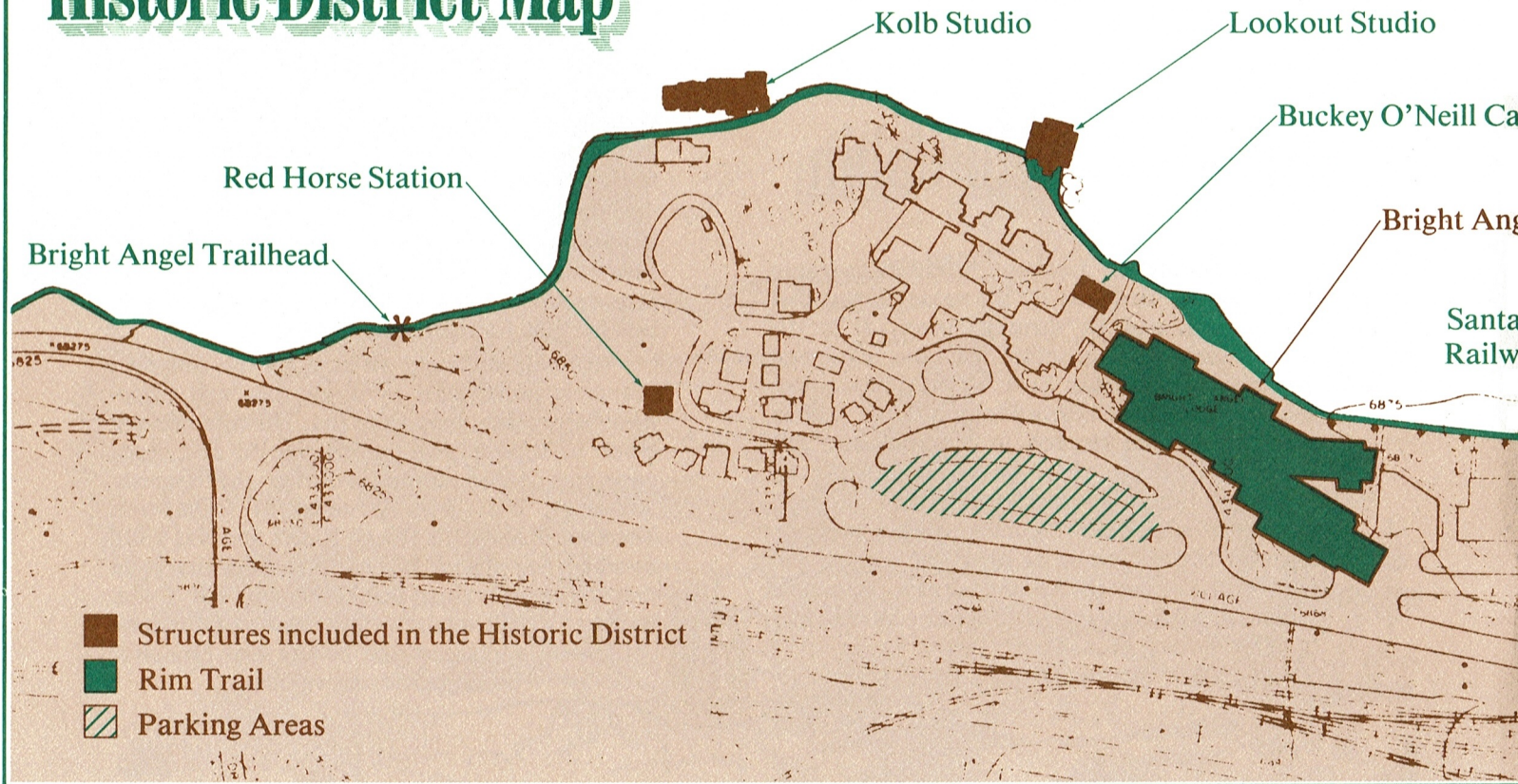
As part owner of the Anita

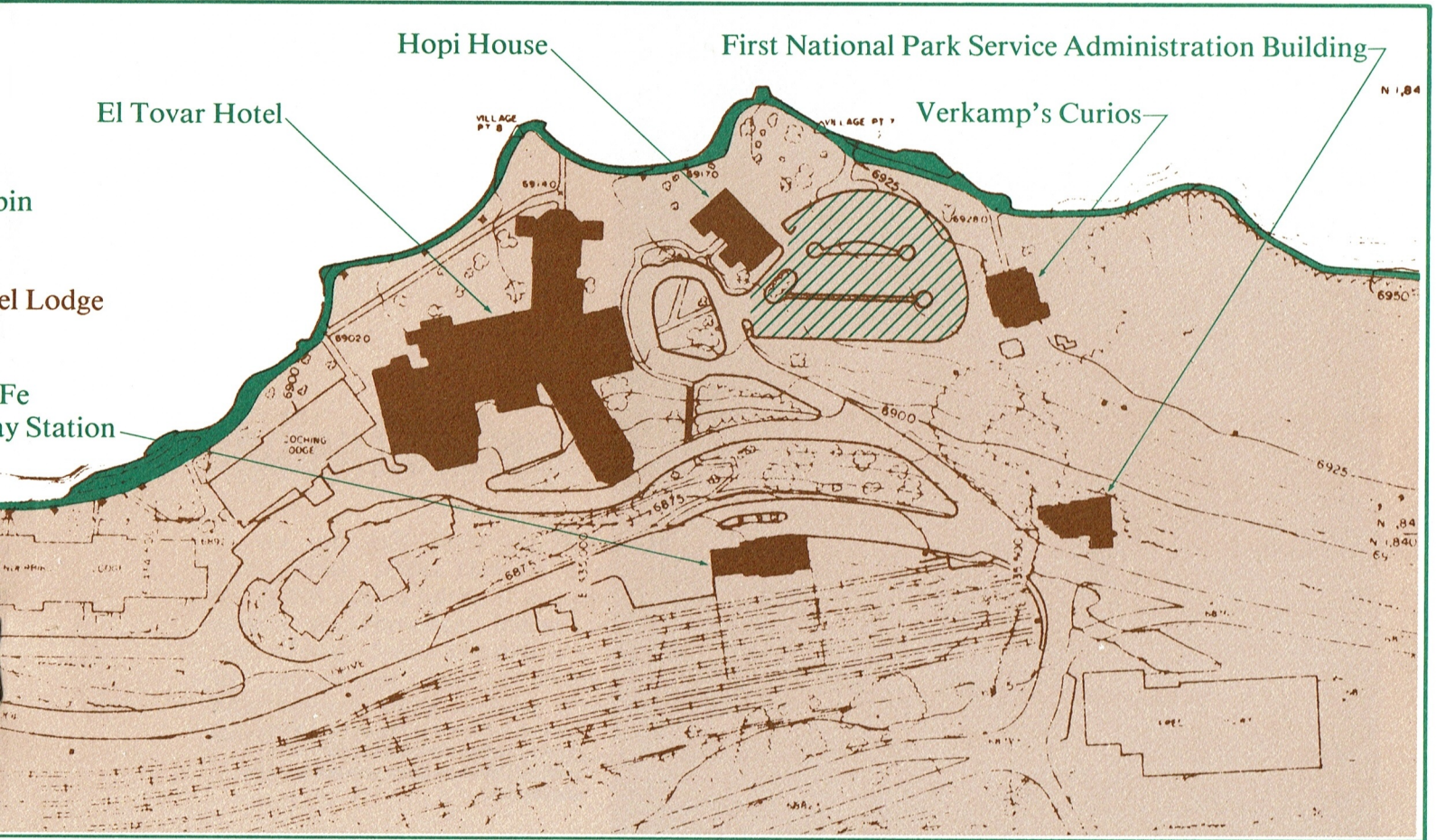
Copper Mines, 15 miles (24 km) south, O'Neill convinced a mining company to build a railroad from Williams to carry the ore. When the mines played out, the Santa Fe Railway bought the bankrupt line and completed it to the rim. This outcome was fine with O'Neill. He valued the Grand Canyon's scenery as well as its minerals and wanted others to experience its breath-taking beauty.

Buckey sold his cabin to the Santa Fe Railway as part of the Bright Angel Hotel. In 1935, Mary Jane Colter showed her concern for historic preservation by incorporating the cabin into her plan for the Bright Angel Lodge.

O'Neill continued to explore the canyon's economic possibilities by hiring men and equipment to prospect below the rim. His own exciting career as a promoter, mayor, sheriff, and newspaperman ended abruptly during the Spanish-American War. Buckey sailed to Cuba with Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders and was killed by sniper fire the day before the famous charge up San Juan Hill. Just before leaving for Cuba, Buckey O'Neill made his last visit to the Grand Canyon, a place whose beauty and economic promise had drawn him.

Historic District Map







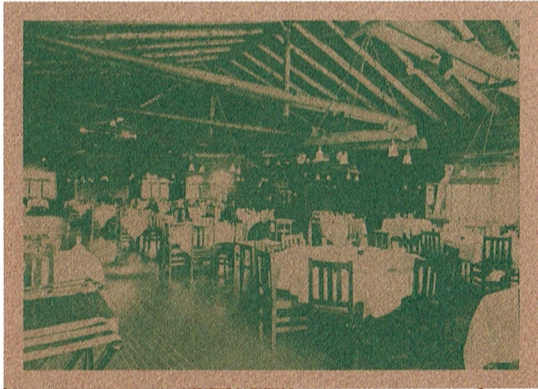
Located 3,300 feet (1,006 meters) below the rim, Indian Gardens has served for years as a halfway point between the river and the rim.

Indian Gardens

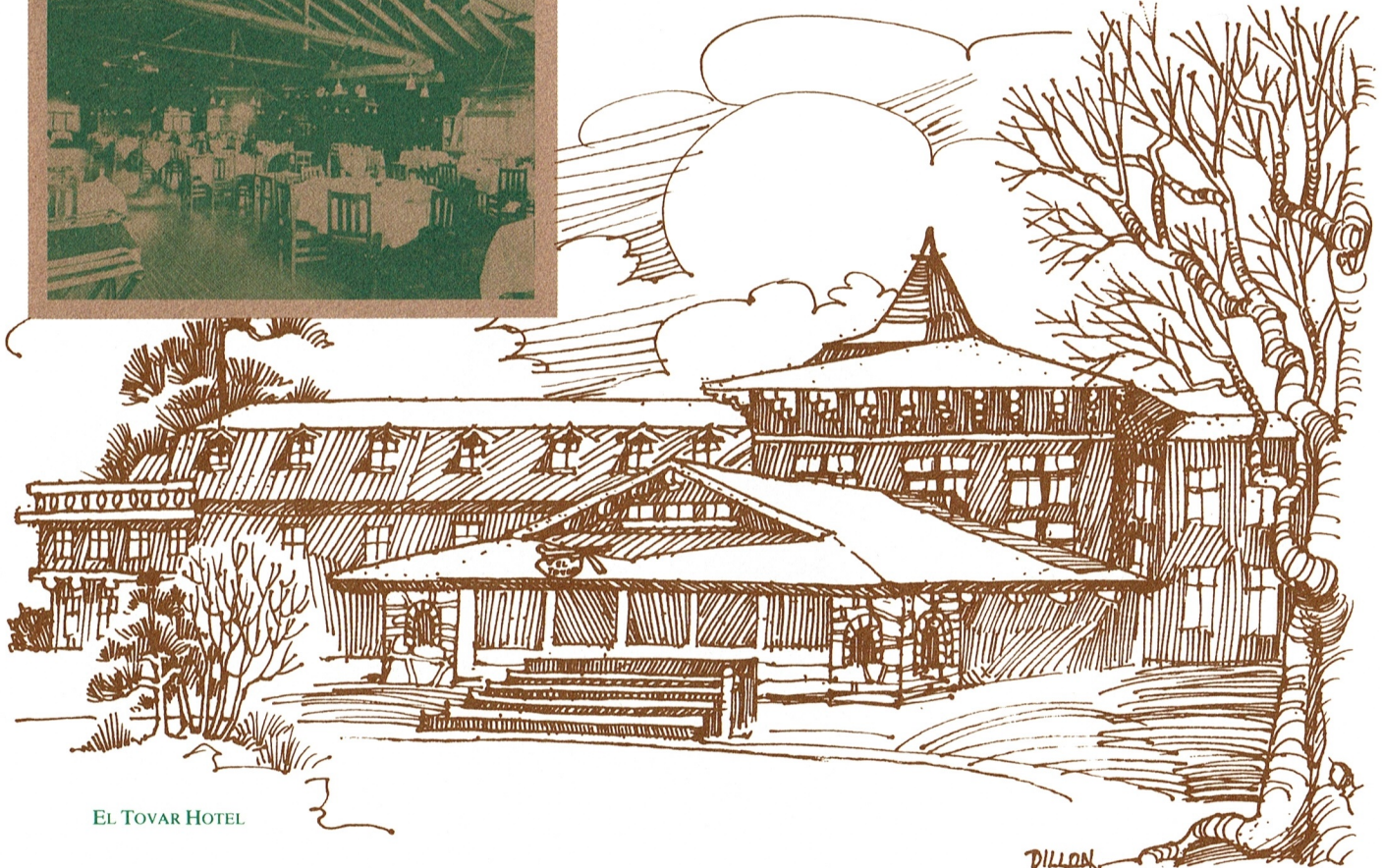
As you walk along the rim towards El Tovar Hotel, Indian Gardens is visible 3,300 feet (1,006 meters) below. It was given the name because the Havasupai Indians once farmed there. Today, Indian Gardens is a campground for backpackers, and its cottonwood trees offer welcome shade to those hiking on the Bright Angel Trail.

To control the area and its water, Ralph Cameron placed mining claims there in 1904. Thirteen years later Leopold's plan described the area's dilapidated buildings and littered grounds. He urged granting the Santa Fe a permit to build accommodations for sixty guests. Mary Jane Colter designed stone cabins to incorporate boulders already on the site. Along the creek, gardens would grow fresh vegetables; cows and chickens would provide milk, cream, and eggs. Colter's plan remained only a plan. The area was still in disrepair when rangers seized the run-down buildings in 1923.

In the 1930s, the Santa Fe Railway built a pipeline to Indian Gardens and pumped water from Garden Creek to the rim. As the 1910 master plan points out, *"The total absence of permanent surface water at Grand Canyon is the greatest hindrance to habitation of the land."* Today, a pipeline 17 miles (27 km) long brings water from Roaring Springs below the North Rim. The pipe follows Bright Angel Creek in the large side canyon to the north and then crosses the Colorado River. Even so, water is still a factor which naturally limits the growth of Grand Canyon Village.



Constructed in 1905, El Tovar offered some of the finest accommodations in the west.



EL TOVAR HOTEL

DILLON

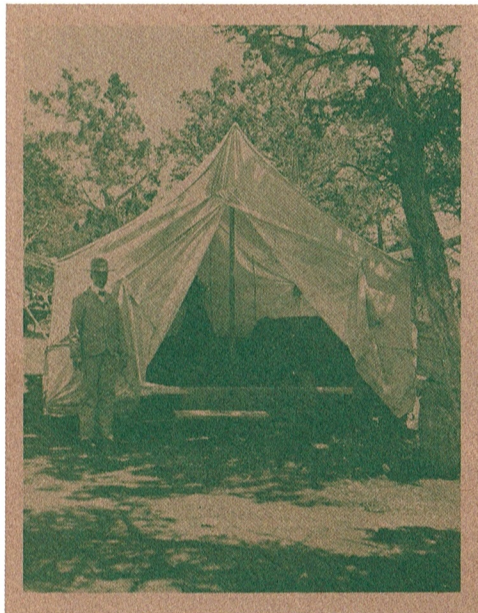
El Tovar Hotel

When El Tovar was completed in 1905, it introduced luxury to the Grand Canyon. Harvey girls, dressed meticulously in black with white aprons and collars, hurried from table to table laying out silverware, fine china, and crystal on spotless linen. Furniture of oak and leather by Stickley Brothers filled the rooms and public areas, matching the hotel's sturdy simplicity. The daily Santa Fe trains brought the best meat and freshest produce available. The Harvey Company's own dairy herd provided milk and cheese while a greenhouse in later years ensured fresh flowers for every table. In exaggerated but enthusiastic fashion, the company's promotional brochure

declared the hotel, in itself, worth a visit to the Grand Canyon. Apparently some visitors agreed. Naturalist John Burroughs wrote of meeting a woman at the Grand Canyon who "thought that they had built the canyon too near the hotel."

From El Tovar, trips left for touring the rim or riding down the Bright Angel Trail. The more adventurous might visit the North Rim. Using a fire the Harvey Company's transportation manager could signal Uncle Jim Owens, a North rim guide and government hunter, to expect guests.

Charles Whittlesey designed El Tovar to combine the qualities of a "Swiss chalet and a Norway villa," with interiors representing a wide range of styles and periods. It also boasted numerous accommodations, including Art and Music Rooms, a Ladies' Lounging Room, Club Room, Solarium, Grotto, and roof gardens. Named after an officer in the army of the Spanish explorer Coronado, El Tovar was unlike any other Fred Harvey hotel — an effort to build a structure that was both compatible with its site and offered luxurious service.



John George Verkamp in front of his tent curio shop in 1898.



Hopi House

Hopi House

In the same year that El Tovar was completed, Santa Fe constructed another building representing a very different idea of architecture appropriate to the Grand Canyon setting. Modeling Hopi House after part of the Hopi village of Old Oraibi, Mary Jane Colter designed this structure as a place for Hopi craftsmen to live and for the Harvey Company to sell their works and other souvenirs. Visitors watched as Hopis wove, made pots, fashioned blankets, cooked their meals, and carried on the activities of daily life. Upstairs was a display of ethnographic objects. Navajos, also doing craft-work, lived in nearby hogans. Hopi House was part of the Fred Harvey Company's attempt to revive Southwest Indian arts and crafts.

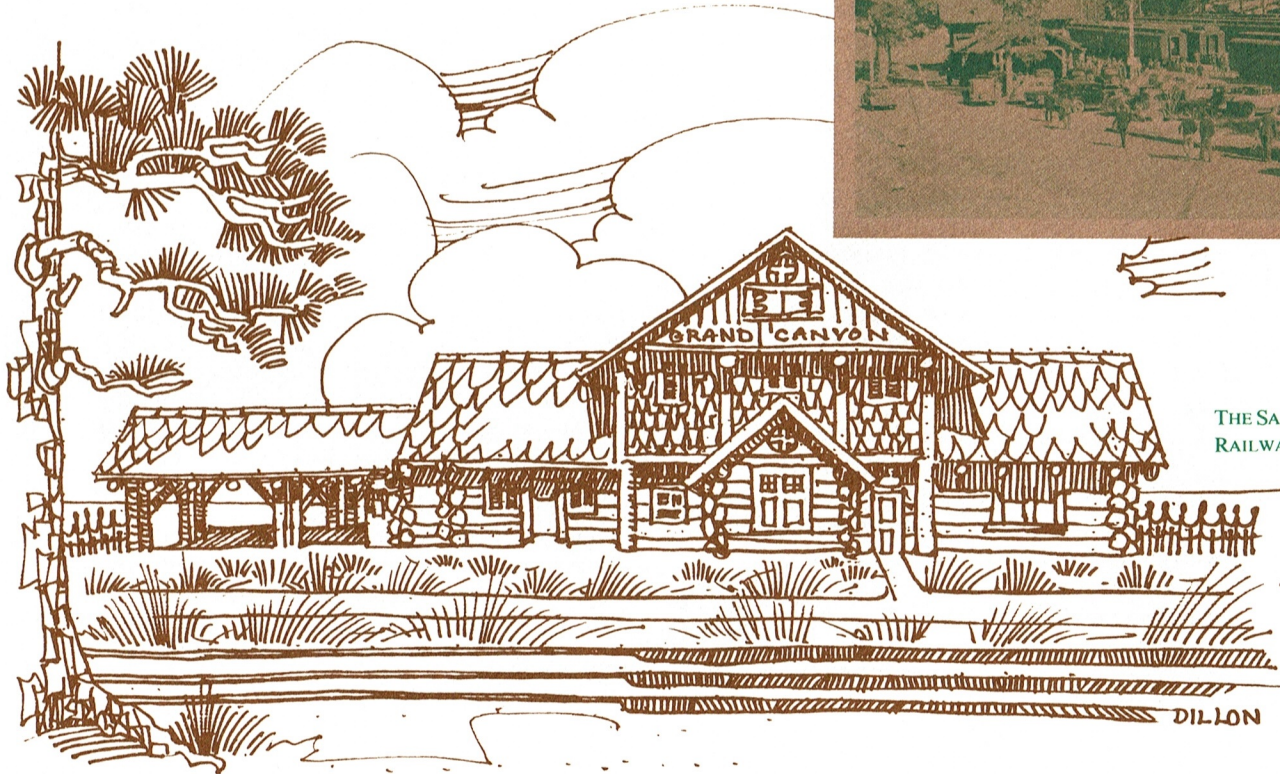
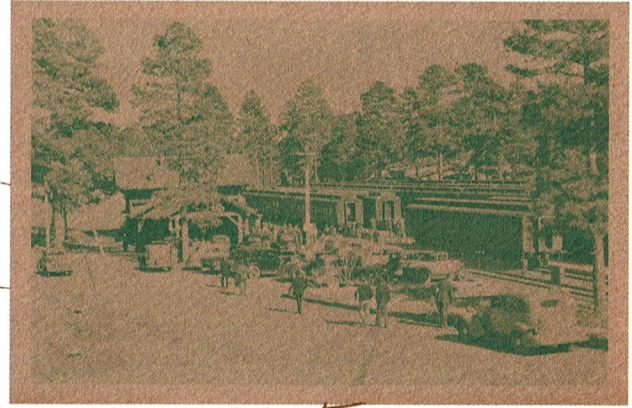
Both El Tovar and Hopi House retain much of their original external appearance. As Colter's first design for Grand Canyon Village, Hopi House combined a romantic reconstruction in Southwestern Indian style with commercial intent and had a lasting effect on park architecture. Lookout Studio and other Grand Canyon buildings by Colter show the influence of Hopi House in their design.

Verkamp's Curios

The first curio shop for visitors to the canyon was started not at the rim but in the offices of the stage line in Flagstaff. That changed in 1898 when John G. Verkamp rented a tent on the grounds of the Bright Angel Hotel and began selling curios and Indian crafts brought to the canyon for the Babbitt Brothers' Trading Company. After several weeks of slow business, Verkamp decided to close shop (or tent) and sold the remainder of the stock to the proprietor of the hotel. But he was aware of the tremendous desire on the part of the tourists to have souvenirs of their travels and of the economic potential in providing them, especially as visitation to Grand Canyon increased. In 1905, Verkamp returned to the canyon and constructed Verkamp's Curios at its present location just east of Hopi House. The store is still owned and operated by the Verkamp family as a concession selling souvenirs and crafts.

The building demonstrates a different kind of fitness to its setting. The roof drains rain-water into a cistern beneath the porch, a handy feature when water came from 120 miles (193 km) away by railroad tank car.

Until rail service was discontinued in 1968, the railway station was the first contact that many visitors had with Grand Canyon Village.



THE SANTA FE
RAILWAY STATION

Santa Fe Railway Station

For many past visitors to the Grand Canyon, the South Rim was an interesting diversion from a transcontinental train trip. Passengers who arrived late at night awakened in their Pullman berths, anxious for a first look at the Grand Canyon and breakfast at the famous El Tovar Hotel. In the early days, they were greeted by hawkers along the track shouting through megaphones, drumming up business for their tour companies. Baggage

carts began to rattle along the platforms as luggage was transferred to El Tovar. Hissing and banging filled the background as steam engines were uncoupled and turned for the return trip to Williams. The disembarking passengers looked forward to several days of scenery and activity that they would long remember. Thousands of people have hurried up the stairs near this station for their first look at what Theodore Roosevelt called, *"...the one great sight which every American should see."*

Built by Santa Fe in 1909, this station differs from other Santa Fe depots in that its rustic character attempts to complement the adjoining forest of ponderosa pine. From 1901 to 1927, more than half of all Grand Canyon visitors arrived by train. In one sense, we might call Grand Canyon Village a railroad town; easy rail access and Santa Fe publicity made Grand Canyon well-known and heavily visited.

Changes in transportation have left train travel to the Grand Canyon behind, at least for now. In 1968, during the last month of passenger service, fewer than 200 people came by train while tens of thousands arrived by automobile.



First National Park Service Administration Building

Just east of the railroad station and across the road is the park's first administration building. Built in 1921, it is currently the park superintendent's residence. This structure illustrates an early attempt by the National Park Service to emulate the Fred Harvey

Company in designing buildings consistent with their surroundings. In the spring of 1918, the NPS established a policy on park developments:

"In the construction of roads, trails, buildings, and other improvements, particular attention must be devoted always to the harmonizing of these improvements with the landscape."

Daniel Hull designed the Grand Canyon Administration Building using elements from Colter's design for Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the canyon. Wood and stone from the rim connect the building to its surroundings. Mary Jane Colter's designs also influenced other National Park Service construction and contributed to the development of "NPS Rustic," an architectural style dominant in the national parks until the 1940s. For almost two decades, this style was thought to be the best answer to the need for harmony between architecture and its natural setting.

Mule and Horse Barns

On the other side of the railroad tracks are other buildings included in the historic district. The oldest of these are the horse barn, distinguished by its tall cupola, and the mule barn, both built in 1907.

In the days when most visitors came by train and travel within the park was by horse-drawn carriage, the barns were the local transportation center. Though their role has been narrowed, they continue to be the center of activity for one of the Grand Canyon's most famous activities — entering the Inner Gorge on muleback.

Early each morning, except when snow lies deep on the trails, the wranglers arrive at the mule barn to choose and saddle mounts for the parties they will guide into the canyon. In the corral at the Bright Angel Trailhead, rider meets mule for the first time, matched by the wrangler foreman's practiced eye and sixth sense. This Grand Canyon ritual goes on as it has for decades, mule and temporary master descending into the Grand Canyon behind their guide.

Also in the historic district are the blacksmith shop near the barns, the park's second administration building, the second post office, the ranger dormitory, former power house, and concessioner housing along Apache Street. Most are examples of rustic architecture, combining wood and stone. Their external appearances have changed little while the uses of some have changed several times.

The buildings of the historic district recall times when a visit to Grand Canyon was perhaps a more leisurely experience because of fewer cars, fewer visitors, and more time to spend. Many conditions have changed but ideas such as the control of change and development are much the same: What kind of building is "right" for this unique setting? What kinds of experiences should visitors to the Grand Canyon be able to have? How much development is too much in an area set aside for perpetual preservation? The Village and the Grand Canyon will change but there will be a continuing need to ask the questions.

Suggested Reading List:

Grand Canyon National Park, ed. Michael D. Yandell, National Parkways, 1977.

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Meals by Fred Harvey, James D. Henderson, Texas Christian University Press, 1969.

"Railroad at the Rim," Gordon Chappell, *Journal of Arizona History*, Spring 1976.

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